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## The Searchers: Dawn & Dusk



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### Chapter 1 by Alex Hors

Dedicated to all my great friends and  
People that I hold dear,  
Thanks, guys.

Cedar felt someone poking at his side, and opened one eye, and then closed it again, quickly, when he saw who it was. Scuttle was nudging him awake.

"Come on, We gotta go food-gathering."

"One more minute!"

"No, get up, we gotta go."

"But i'm tired!"

"You will wake up when we get moving."

"But I don't want to!"

"You have to."

"But it's cold outside!"

"Remember your promise."

"Fine!"

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At that, Cedar sat up and rubbed his eyes. He grumbled about it, but went outside into the freezing cold. It was a beautiful and cold winter day. Nothing out of the usual, but he could sense something wrong. What is it? Why do I feel uneasy? Somethings not right... He could tell, and the fur on his spine lifted up.

"Something wrong?" Scuttle asked in his rich voice, his eyes showing nothing but amusement.

"Nah, just the cold. Where is Cloudy?" Cedar asked, shaking out his fur, so that he looked very fluffy. Scuttle snorted.

"Cloudy is still asleep, but Rain will come with us." He said, amusement shining in his eyes. Cedar heaved a deep sigh. I hardly ever see her anymore. Cedar longed to see her but he ignored the feeling.

"Let's go, and get this over with." He said grumpily. He looked around for the silver-grey squirrel called Rain. A fast blur of greyish-silver hurtled towards them. Rain exploded through the snow.

"We goin' patrolling? Or food-gathering? What are we doin', what are we doin', What, what what???" Rain asked excitedly. Cedar sighed because he knew that even though Rain had a nice, quiet, pretty name, she was a fast, energetic, annoying, furball that never stopped moving. Even now, Rain was bouncing up and down happily, throwing questions at them like a machinegun.

This was the one and only thing Cedar disliked about this place. Rain ran around Cedar and Scuttle, still asking questions, and running as fast as she could. By now, she was just a silver, yelping blur.

"Shut UP!" Cedar roared at her. Scuttle watched amused, in a sitting position as Rain slowed down enough to be reduced to bouncing happily. Cedar grunted and began to go to the nut-burying place, where they stored food for the winter. Rain followed happily, and Scuttle caught up to them. Cedar still felt the strangeness that he had felt before, but now it was fading.

"Getting used to the cold yet?" Scuttle asked.

"Yeah."

"Hey, if anything bothers you, just tell me. I am your mentor after all."

"K." Cedar said, but he felt guilty as he said it. sorry, guess i'll tell you next time... Cedar felt the eeriness go away completely. Rain ran on ahead, then back, acting like as if the cold snow was nothing. Cedar sighed as the sun began to rise higher in the sky. And he said wearily:

"That is... going to be a long day."

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asked. alarmed. She turned to face the undersized, brown squirrel, when she began to laugh at the sight of his face.

“What? What do you think is funny?!?” He snapped at her.

“You- Y-Y-You H-Have Spi-Spid-Spider W-Web On Y-Y-Your F-Face!” Cloudy fell over on the ground in laughter and rolled over and over. Prickle tried to brush it off himself, but ended up with the spider web all over himself. Cloudy, still giggling, helped him with taking off the web.

“Let’s go and--” She broke off as a chill seeped through her fur, chilling her to the bone. She froze, her expression unreadable.

“Cloudy?” Prickle asked, uneasily.

“What is it? What’s wrong?”

Cedar heard a shriek in the distance. He froze. It sounded like-

“CLOUDY!!!” He roared and raced off in the direction of the scream, ignoring the shouts from Scuttle and Rain. It was coming from the darker part of the forest, where it was so thick that no snow ever got past the branches. It was ever so dark there. The shriek faded away to nothing, and it was eerily silent.

“Cloudy?” Cedar sniffed around and picked up Cloudy’s scent, with Prickle’s scent right next to her’s... He also smelled rank fear scent crawling around theirs. then the feeling that he felt in the morning. Then he started to pick up the faint smell of smoke... and blood. Cedar felt his blood run cold. Mouse bile! he cursed under his breath. He knew where the scent of smoke was coming from.

The Demon-dog.

Cloudy awoke in a cage with Prickle slumped in a sitting-ish position in a corner of the cage. Everything smelled of smoke, and she could barely see because of the dark and gloomy shadows that crowded around her.

“Prickle? Where are we?” She asked the slumped shape. When he didn’t answer she walked over and prodded him, gently. She shrieked with shock as the figure fell down on the ground, and she saw it’s face and chest

It was swarming with bugs and ants.

It was rotting.

It had it’s eyes were chewed

It was what she thought was her own Prickle.

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Prickle blinked his eyes as they adjusted to the gloom.

“Cloudy? Is that you?” He called to a figure, lying down in the dark. It was white fur, but something seemed off. He crept over, and prodded it with his foot. It rolled over and he just caught himself from yelping in surprise. So, this is the game you’re playing with us. Bad choice. Prickle lay down and concentrated. He heard a shriek and scrambling and claws against wood. He opened one eye and saw the real Cloudy pressing against the wall, her eyes wild.

“Cloudy!” He cried out. She looked stunned that he had spoken.

“P-Prickle?” She whispered uncertainly, as though she didn’t believe that it was really him.

“Yes, It’s okay, it’s really me, you’re under a spell. Concentrate! Let yourself believe that I am here, and we are in a forest. Concentrate with all your might!” He nearly screamed. The image was fading, and the last thing he saw of the real cloudy was her nodding, eyes wide and worried.

Cedar ran along the smoke-trail, sniffing anywhere he could for Cloudy or Prickle. The dark forest trees loomed around him, blotting out almost all of the sunlight. He gasped with pain when his paw slammed down on a porcupine quill, but he kept on running, a trail behind him, showing the way by blood. His paw seared with pain, and his eyes streamed from the cold, but he ignored it and willed for there to be a sign, anything, to tell him that his friends were there.

“Hang on, Cloudy! I’ll find you!”

Fala woke with a start. Something bad is happening... She thought as She looked through the entrance of the den, at the strange silent stillness that seemed to vibrate with doom. Fala looked around and spotted Dusty, a small clump of fur, fast asleep, next to their new caretaker, Nika. Fala sighed and jumped out of the small den. Having Nika as their Step-mother, meant that Bonzo, the captain of the group, was their Step-father. She a strange stillness settled over her and she froze in her tracks, a smoke scent drifted towards her. But the tree isn’t on fire... Neither is the forest... And there is no wind. How in the name of the Caribou King is smoke drifting towards me??? Then, all at once she knew. And she ran, almost screaming with fear, to her den. Her nightmare couldn’t fit in there, right? It would be too big to materialize inside the den, wouldn’t it? Cedar, save me!

Cedar spat on the ground, still ignoring the pain in his paw. He charged forward, through the

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"You'd better be coming, Gran." He hissed under his breath as he skidded through the old, rotting leaves, that littered the forest floor. Cedar skidded to a halt and snarled at his nightmare monster. It growled and barked at him, it's eyes glowing a blood red color. Cedar spat on the ground and hissed at it:

"Where'd you take Cloudy!" He snarled. The dark cloud of a demon barked a loud booming bark, and swung an enormous paw down towards him, He felt himself go flying and he shrieked with pain as he saw the woods whirl around him. He was flying through the woods like a plaything. I'm a toy, again. Then, darkness engulfed him.

Cloudy stood up and shook herself off. She was in a forest, Prickle sitting next to her, staring into the forest, rigidly.

"Prickle?" She asked tentatively, not wanting to know if this was another one of the tricks.

"Shh!"

"But-"

"SHHH!"

"Why!"

Prickle looked at her like she had grown another head. Then he pointed. He pointed at a cloudy looking figure, it was tossing around a smaller, browner, Fuzzier, figure. Cloudy thought she might faint, because she immediately knew what the thing was, and what it was tossing around. she opened and closed her eyes several times, just to be sure. Yes, there was no doubt about it. it was the Demon dog told in stories, and it was tossing Cedar around like a plaything, like a pine cone, and with no mercy whatsoever. Then it threw Cedar too far for it to reach out again, and as it moved towards Cedar, Cloudy realized that he wasn't moving.

Cedar!

Dusty looked up to see Fala looking like as if her worst nightmare came true right before her eyes. it sent concern shivering through her.

"What's wrong?" asked the small, frail, squirrel. Fala shook out her pelt and blinked a few times, sniffed the air and breathed a deep sigh of relief. Dusty cocked her head in curiosity.

"You can tell me, I can keep a secret!" Dusty nodded. Fala sighed again and started to tell her everything, from the start of the story to the end. Fala felt herself begin to shake. It was her nightmare dog!

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Prickle saw the flood of pain, grief, and panic in her eyes when Cloudy saw Cedar. It will all be okay... We'll save him. Prickle ran at the dog and clamped his teeth on one of its hind legs. out of the corner of his eye, he saw Cloudy race down towards Cedar's figure, lying in the dirty leaves. The large dog swung around, trying to bite at Prickle, but failing. Finally, Prickle had to let go, and he was flung towards where Cloudy stood over Cedar. Prickle got up and heard a rumble, growing into a roar as it approached him. Prickle stood up and snarled at it. He heard a faint voice coming from the woods but ignored it. Then, with the jaws of the demon-dog gaping wide, right before him, a voice sounding like an old oak tree creaking in the wind shouted at the dog. "Get down you stupid mutt! I'm gone for five minutes and you get out of your cage? Stupid! Stupid! Stupid! I told you to stay!"

Cedar awoke to an ache in his head. He immediately understood why.

"You! What are you doing here?" He hissed at the old squirrel. Feeling of joy, anger, sadness, hate, and fear raced through him and most of all disgust. it was disgust at his existence at the old squirrel that had made him and created the monster that lived inside his soul.

"I'm just strolling through, enjoying the trees, and I just happened to be saving you ungrateful furry hide, because you sent out the SOS signal." She said in a mocking hateful voice.

"You did this to me, so you have no right calling me ungrateful! You don't ever seem to regret it! And your own son too!" Cedar hissed at her. The old squirrel stepped into the light, right in front of Cedar. She was a golden hazel color with dark eyes filled with hate and a greying muzzle. She looked freakishly like Cedar, but with a lighter fur color.

"Oh, you have no idea how much I regretted making you." She said with acid that made cedar lower his gaze.

"I thought that maybe I knew a person who loved me when you let me into your den that night. You were usually ignoring me, but you had let me in lovingly that night. It really hurt, you know. it hurt so much that the pain was unbearable, so you made it stop." Cedar sighed and curled into a tight in the nettles that littered the forest floor, his injured paw sticking out at an odd angle. Something in the old squirrel's gaze shifted.

"Well, you were wrong. I never wanted you. At least you can't bleed now, even if you do still feel the pain" Cedar looked up at her from under his tail

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The End

## Chapter 2 by Lynx S. Wood



Plz no more chapters, third story in making  
~Alex Hors Side

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